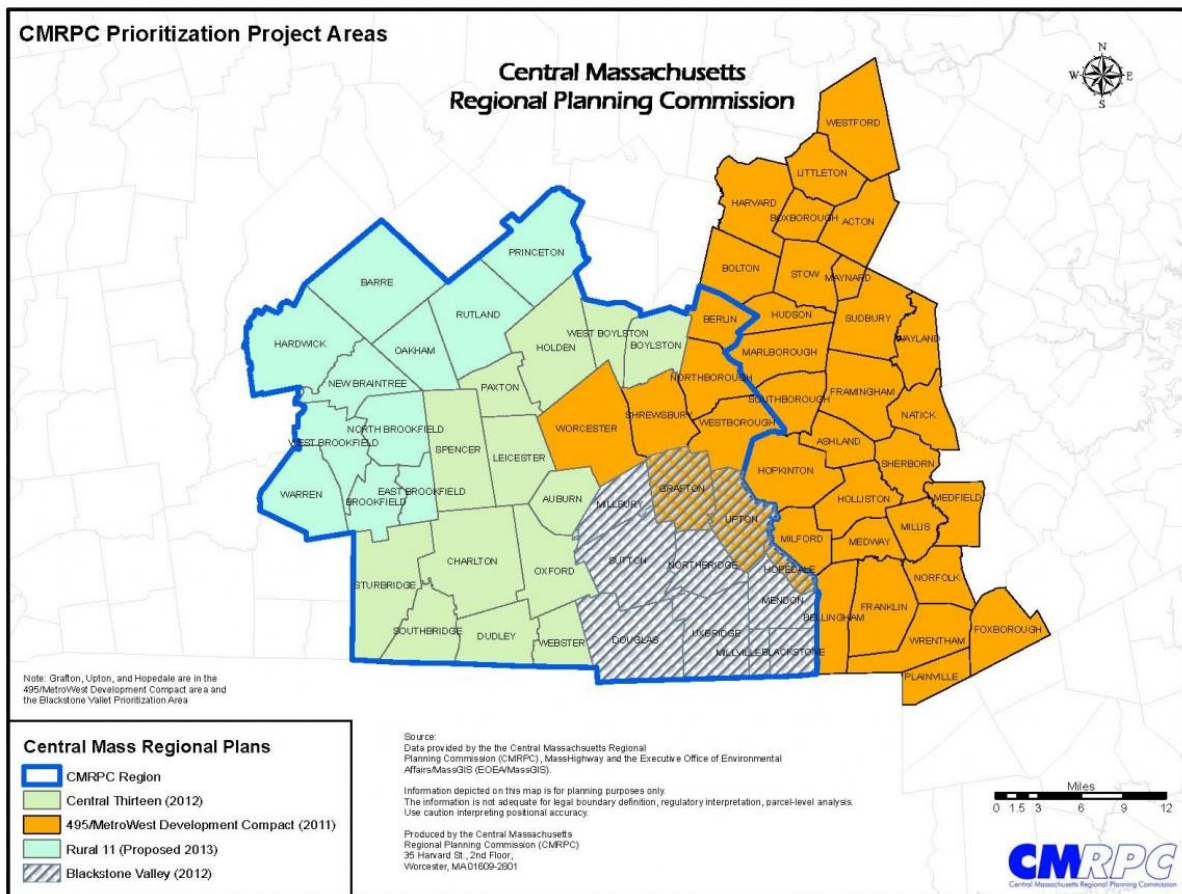


CENTRAL MASSACHUSETTS REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION (CMRPC) LAND USE PRIORITY PLAN

January 6, 2015



Executive Summary

INTRODUCTION

Since 2008, the Patrick Administration, through the Executive Offices of Housing and Economic Development (EOHED), Energy and Environmental Affairs (EOEEA) and the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT), has partnered with Regional Planning Agencies (RPAs) and municipalities to create Land Use Priority Plans (LUPPs). LUPPs serve as the cornerstone of the Administration's Planning Ahead for Growth Strategy – a strategy that consists of four core elements: 1) *identifying* promising places for growth and preservation, 2) *creating* prompt and predictable zoning and permitting, 3) *investing* in public infrastructure to support growth in promising places, and 4) *marketing* priority locations to businesses and developers. LUPPs are the result of a bottom-up, highly participatory process used to identify local, regional and state priorities for development and preservation. The priority areas identified in these plans serve as a framework for focusing public investment, technical assistance and private action to encourage land development and preservation that is consistent with local desires, regional considerations and statewide goals.

To date, four Land Use Priority Plans have been completed in Massachusetts, encompassing 91 of the Commonwealth's 351 municipalities. The four previously completed LUPPs include:

- the South Coast Rail Economic Development and Land Use Corridor Plan (2008);
- the 495/MetroWest Development Compact Plan (2011);
- the Merrimack Valley Regional Plan (2013); and
- the Metro North Land Use Priority Plan (2014).

With the completion of the Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission (CMRPC) LUPP, a total of 123 communities are now included in a LUPP that identifies priority development and preservation areas at the local, regional and state level. This total constitutes approximately one-third of all Massachusetts municipalities.

This report provides an overview of the process and methodology used to identify Priority Development Areas and Priority Preservation Areas (PDAs and PPAs) in the 40 municipalities that make up the CMRPC region.

BACKGROUND

Having already identified priority development and preservation areas for eight of its member communities in the 495/MetroWest Compact, CMRPC undertook three separate prioritization projects between 2012 and 2013 in order to complete the prioritization process in each of its remaining 32 communities.

The 495/MetroWest Compact, in particular, served as a model for the Blackstone Valley, Central 13 and Rural 11 Prioritization Projects. The 495/MetroWest Compact established a set of shared principles for state, regional, and local strategies for the growth, development, and land preservation efforts in the 37 cities and towns that comprised the 495/MetroWest Compact Region. These fundamental principles were carried through to each of the other three CMRPC Prioritization Projects as well.

The six fundamental principles informing this framework are:

- Continued new growth will likely require major transportation and other infrastructure upgrades, beyond what is needed to keep existing systems in good repair.
- New commercial and residential growth must occur in a manner that is respectful of open space resources, transportation networks, and water resources in the region.
- Land use and transportation decisions must take into account the principles established by the Global Warming Solutions Act, the Clean Energy and Climate Plan, the transportation re-organization statute and GreenDOT Initiative.
- Workforce housing must continue to be produced and preserved within the region at a scale that allows the number of workers living in the region to keep pace with the number of new jobs created in the region.
- Sustainable new growth will involve the creation and maintenance of well planned-transportation networks and, where available, an effective public transit system that will coordinate with and build on existing transportation and, where available, transit systems.
- Coordinated planning and implementation efforts are necessary, particularly where jurisdictions and boundaries intersect.

LOCAL & REGIONAL PROCESS

Throughout the process, CMRPC worked with municipal staff, elected officials, and other stakeholders to identify promising locations for both development and preservation. In total, the plan identifies 207 local PDAs and 243 local PPAs that were identified by CMRPC municipalities during the Blackstone Valley, Central 13 and Rural 11 Prioritization Projects. Table 1 shows the number of local priority areas by subregion.

Table 1: Local PDAs and PPAs by Subregion

Prioritization Project	# of PDAs	# of PPAs
Blackstone Valley	65	52
Central 13	69	89

Rural 11	73	102
Total (CMRPC LUPP)	207	243

To trim this list down to a set of regionally-significant priority areas, CMRPC implemented a regional screening process that utilized multiple sources of data and public input. A complete list of the Regional Screening Criteria is included in the full report.

Examples of regional criteria for screening the PDAs are:

- Is the area on or adjacent to already developed areas?
- Is infrastructure (transportation, water, and sewer) available to serve the area?
- Does the development area serve multiple communities?
- Does the development potential include opportunity for housing?

Examples of regional criteria for screening the PPAs are:

- Is the area in, or does it connect to, a wellhead or water supply protection area?
- Does the area contain prime farmland soils? Is it a working farm?
- Does the area connect to other permanently protected land?

Table 2 shows the number of regional priority areas by subregion.

Table 2: Regional PDAs and PPAs by Subregion

Prioritization Project	# of PDAs	# of PPAs
Blackstone Valley	37	34
Central 13	45	84
Rural 11	29	102
Total (CMRPC LUPP)	111	220

STATE PROCESS

The Commonwealth then screened the regional priority areas in order to identify the locations that would constitute the state PDA and PPA lists. The purpose of selecting state priority areas is to highlight those areas where local desires, regional priorities and statewide goals are best aligned.

In selecting the state priority development areas, the Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development placed weight on whether development at a site would further statewide goals, such as the Sustainable Development Principles, MassDOT's Mode-shift Goal or the Administration's Multi-family Housing Production Goal. To determine consistency with these policies, the state

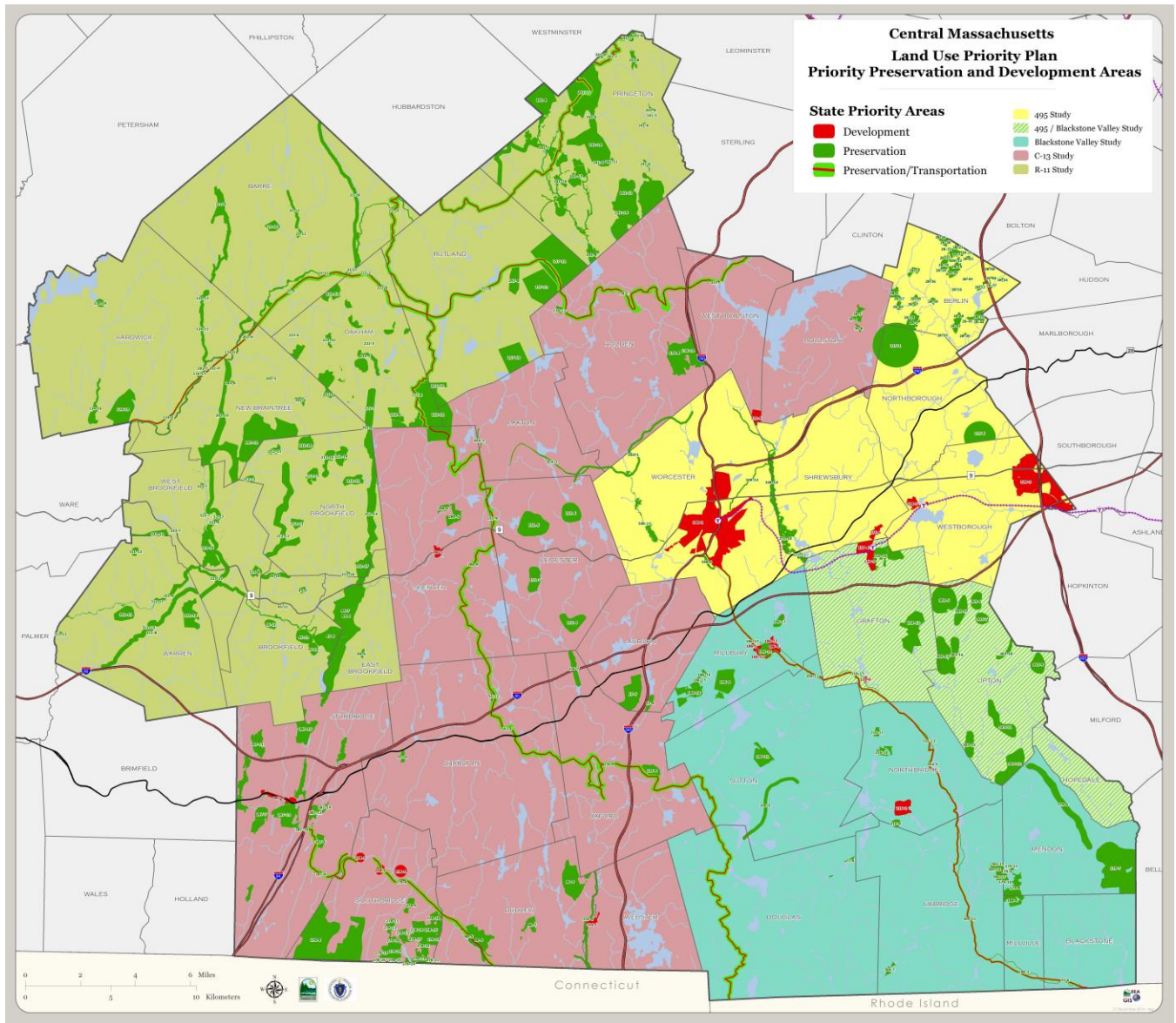
incorporated quantitative (GIS) and qualitative (feedback gathered at public forums, or via comment cards submitted online) analysis. In selecting the state priority preservation areas, the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs did not see a need to trim the list down, based on the importance that local and regional stakeholders placed on preserving the region's natural heritage. Instead, utilizing an updated GIS tool developed by state agencies in cooperation with nonprofit land conservation groups, EOEEA identified areas that communities may have neglected to designate as PPAs earlier in the process. EOEEA presented these areas, which often formed critical connections between PPAs, to the municipalities as well as CMRPC. As long as all parties agreed, the newly identified areas became PPAs at the local, regional and state levels.

In the end, the state selected a total of 15 priority development areas from the Blackstone Valley, Central 13 and Rural 11 Prioritization Projects, bringing the total number of state PDAs from the CMRPC region to 23. The state also selected 220 priority preservation areas from the three Prioritization Projects mentioned above. A complete list of CMRPC state PDAs is attached, as is a demonstrative list of state PPAs from the CMRPC region.

CONCLUSION

This report serves as a first step in identifying the locations where development and preservation efforts should be targeted in the future to maximize returns on public and private investment and to grow the region while ensuring that residents and employees in Central Massachusetts continue to experience a high quality of life. While this report does highlight regional and state priority locations, it represents a snapshot in time and other local sites that were not elevated to regional or state significance still may present important opportunities for growth and preservation. As circumstances change over time, these sites should be re-evaluated to determine if they can also assist in furthering the goals of local municipalities, the region, and the Commonwealth.

CMRPC State Priority Areas Map



EOHED/EOEEA Lists of State PDA and PPA Locations in CMRPC Region

	PDA Name	Municipality	Regional ID	Prioritization Project
1	Grafton Science Park 43D	Grafton	110-3	495 & Blackstone Valley
2	Cen-Tech Park 43D	Grafton	110-4	495 & Blackstone Valley
3	Fisherville 40R	Grafton	110-9	Blackstone Valley
4	Canal Street Redevelopment Area	Millbury	186-4	Blackstone Valley
5	Felter's Mill	Millbury	186-5	Blackstone Valley
6	West/River Street	Millbury	186-12	Blackstone Valley
7	Howe Ave.	Millbury	186-13	Blackstone Valley
8	Whitinsville PDA	Northbridge	216-2	Blackstone Valley
9	Cen-Tech East	Shrewsbury	271-6	495/MetroWest
10	Southbridge Business Center	Southbridge	278-1	Central 13
11	Urban Renewal Area	Southbridge	278-2	Central 13
12	Globe Village	Southbridge	278-3	Central 13
13	Town Center	Spencer	280-3	Central 13
14	Commercial Tourist District	Sturbridge	287-8	Central 13
15	Town Center	Webster	316-1	Central 13
16	43D at I-495/Route 9	Westborough	328-3A	495/MetroWest
17	43D at I-495/Route 10	Westborough	328-3B	495/MetroWest
18	43D at I-495/Route 11	Westborough	328-3C	495/MetroWest
19	43D at I-495/Route 12	Westborough	328-3D	495/MetroWest
20	43D at I-495/Route 13	Westborough	328-3E	495/MetroWest
21	TOD: Commuter Rail Station	Westborough	328-5	495/MetroWest
22	Worcester Corporate Center	West Boylston	321-5	Central 13
23	Downtown, City Square	Worcester	348-1	495/MetroWest

	PPA Name	Municipality	Regional ID	Prioritization Project
1	Mass Central Rail Trail	6 communities	Six ID #'s	495 & Blackstone Valley
2	Southern Area Watershed	Southbridge	278-8	Central 13
3	Wilson Farm	Spencer	280-5	Central 13
4	Felton Field	Barre	21-11	Rural 11
5	Unprotected Bio-Habitat Areas	Oakham	222-11	Rural 11

This list is intended to provide representative examples of Priority Preservation Areas (PPAs). For a complete list of sites, please visit:

<http://cmrpc.org/cmrpc-regional-land-use-planning-prioritization-projects>